

Phlegmasia dolens.

No 1

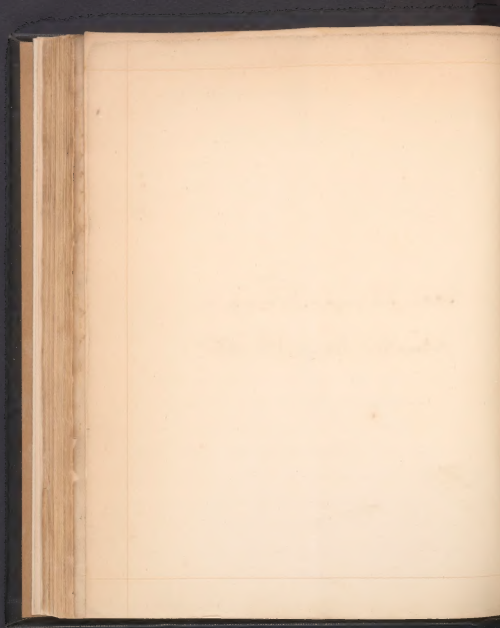
Isaac Thomas
No Gouge & 235. Market St

No 16. Octr 25

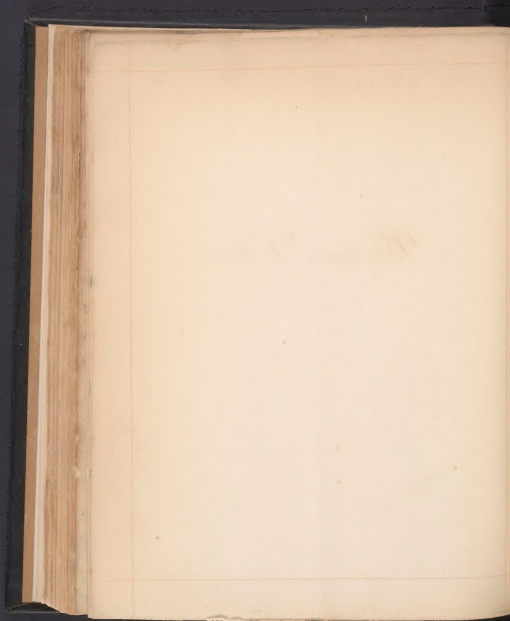
Phlegm. Dolens

Isaac Thomas. Pennsylv.

admitted March 6th 1820



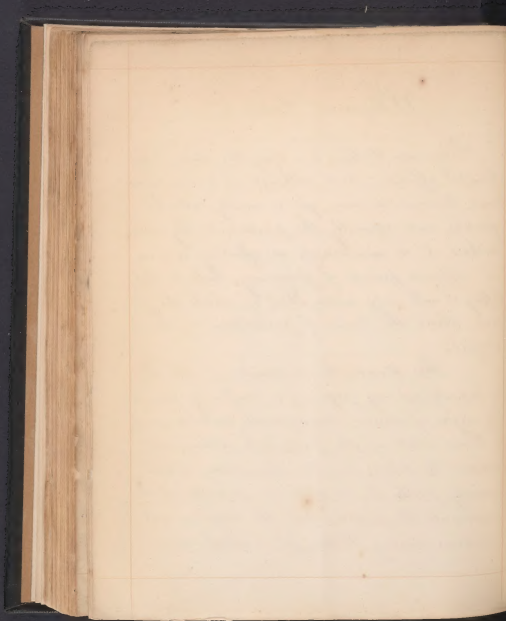
Phlegmasia Dolens.



Phlegmasia Dolens

Phlegmasia Dolens is a singular and very painful affection, and although it is said sometimes to occur in men, yet it mostly attacks females, and especially the parturient. By some authors it is mentioned, as affecting women at different periods of pregnancy, but in this Essay I will only notice that, of which the female, about the time of parturition, is the subject.

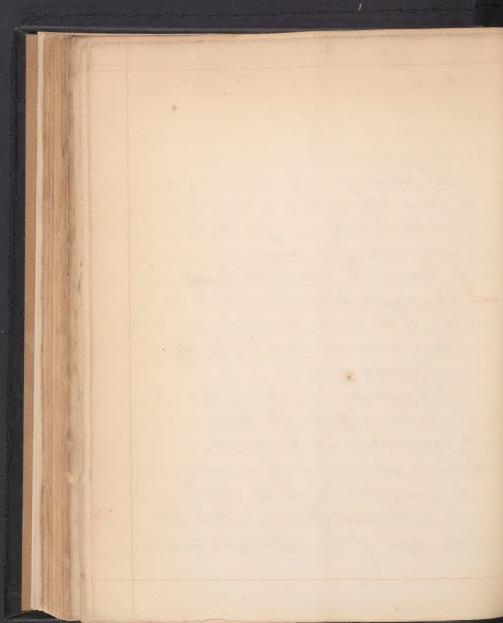
This disease, the occurrence of which is happily not very frequent, is uniformly preceded by signs of uterine derangement, irritation, and a tender state of the parts, both within, and without the vulva; but the symptoms which usually precede it, are often the precursors of other complaints. It is said, that the woman will sometimes during labour, feel a sharp pain



shooting from the uterus down the leg; but this disappears until the usual time of an attack, which is from the tenth, to the fourteenth day after delivery, and sometimes even later.

The patient generally complains of pain in the lower belly, which is increased by pressure, pains in the back, leg, and foot. The uterine region is frequently swelled, and strangury often accompanies the disease. The pulse is either frequent, tense, and full, - or quick, feeble, and small. In the commencement of the disease, the skin is generally hot, and there is considerable thirst, but scarcely, if ever, any appetite for food.

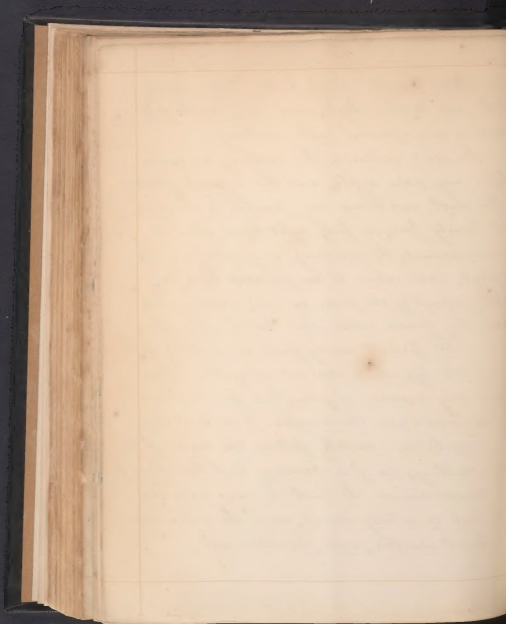
It is most commonly the case, that but one of the extremities is affected. The disease is ushered in by rigors, sickness at the stomach, and head-ache, and is accompanied by an aching pain in the groin, with considerable stiffness in the hip joint. Sometimes, the pain is first felt, near the origin of the gastrocnemii muscles,



in which case, it is very acute, and extends both up to the thigh, and down to the foot; and is accompanied with swelling.

In some instances, the swelling commences before any pain is felt, and the inguinal glands often swell, and become very painful to the touch. In twenty four, or forty eight hours from its commencement, the swelling is generally at its extent, and when it has proceeded thus far, the sharpness of the pains in some measure abates, and they become rather of a dull or aching kind.

The patient mostly finds an inability to move the leg, which does not altogether proceed from any increase of pain, but from a want of command over the muscles. A distinct line of demarkation generally follows the course of the swelling, as if a bandage had been firmly bound round the limb. In some cases where the limb is entirely sound, one of the labia will be found swelled, and the other not.



At the height of the disease the pulse becomes very frequent and quick, but full and small; the countenance pale and chlorotic; the tongue moist and white; the bowels sometimes costive, but when loosed, the stools are for the most part foetid and bilious. The urine is turbid and deposits a muddy sediment. If the disease attacks during the lochial discharge, this flow sometimes still continues, and at other times becomes foetid; but in a smaller number it is not at all affected. The patient passes sleepless nights, and if the febrile symptoms abate, profuse perspiration issues, and the internal parts, and affected side of the vagina, are very painful to the touch.

This swelling has some peculiarities; as, upon pressing the skin, there is no change of colour, there is heat and pain without redness, and the limb lies as if dead, without ability to move it. It is easily distinguished from



edema; when you make pressure upon it and then move the limb, the effusion immediately disappears; in edema it does not but remains for sometime.

Sometimes the leg will be increased to double its common size, and is generally much larger than natural. The other leg is sometimes affected in like manner; but this rarely takes place until the first is recovering, and frequently one leg gets well without any affection of the other.

The swelling, and febrile ^{the} symptoms, sometimes go off, in three or four days, and at other times, will not disappear for a fortnight; and they may even continue much longer and the leg remain partially unwell, after they have entirely subsided. Posture is supposed to have but little effect on the swelling. Hard lumps will often be found, in the course of the lymphatics, and the inguinal glands swelled, but these generally disappear, with the tu-



infection of the leg. The second leg being attached, appears to have no influence, on the cure of the first, and the treatment is similar to that of the first. A coldness is perceived in the limb that is last affected, and is succeeded by a pain in the abdomen and groin; and it is said, that the first leg may be attacked, the second time in succession, tho' this happens, but seldom.

Death may take place, from exhaustion in the system, and more particularly, where much constitutional debility preceded it, and it is sometimes the case, that violent efforts at motion prove fatal. Suppuration or gangrene may take place, and death, consequently, ensue; these last serious circumstances, however, under proper treatment, seldom occur.

Constitutional strength, and the use of the limb, are sometimes very long, in returning, the leg remaining permanently swelled and full;



at other times, the disease is speedily removed, and the patient begins to enjoy her usual state of health: but, it is generally, a considerable length of time, before she completely recovers.

This disease appears, in no way, to be connected, with any preceding complaint, or any peculiarity of constitution. It attacks alike, the weak, and the robust; the nervous, and the temperate: but if there is any difference, it is thought to be, the former, that are most frequently, the subjects of this disease. It does not seem to depend, on any particular species of labour, nor does the excitement, either before, or after parturition, appear to influence it although, some authors, have attributed it to impurities enjoyed to remain through inattention, in the vagina, after delivery, and absorbed by the injured glands;—while others suppose, that it may be induced, by long continued pressure on the nerves,



and soft parts, within the pelvis, in difficult labours. M. Puzos and M. Secret believe, that it originates, from a metastasis of milk in the affected part, but upon puncturing the swelling, nothing of a milky nature appears. The opinion of its being an inflammatory disease, as advanced by Dr. Keil, appears to be, the most correct view of the subject. It is always, more or less, accompanied by inflammatory symptoms.

When the swelling is going down, by rubbing the hand over the limb it would appear, as if, a great number of small lumps were contained under the skin, but this soon disappears, and the limb has an oedematous appearance.

In the cure of the disease, two indications present themselves. The first is, to repel the constitutional disease. The second, to relieve the local affection. In the first place, when



the pulse is found full and tense, venesection is to be employed, and, if the pulse recovers it, it is to be repeated. Purging is also necessary, and for this purpose, the mercurial preparations are to be preferred. After the bowels are fully evacuated of any offensive matter contained in them, they should be kept gently open, through the whole course of the cure, with the laxatives; but purging should not be carried to a great extent. Low diet, absolute rest, and cool air, are always necessary. The diet should be composed of vegetables, and the farinacea; as food containing animal matter, is always hurtful. After the induction of natural action mild cathartics, are of considerable service, in assisting to break down the form of the disease, and if there be much pain, Opium should be added, to produce the necessary repose. Digitalis has been recommended, but of it



I can say nothing, never having seen it used.

The Topical applications are numerous. A variety of emollient applications to the limb, have been recommended, and the poultice used by John Clark, is said to be of great service; but, the vinegar bath also appears, to be a very excellent topical application. This remedy is very simple in its administration. Three or four warm bricks are to be plunged in vinegar, and when they have imbibed a sufficient quantity, they are to be wrapped in flannel, and placed by the sides of the affected leg; and over the bricks and leg, another fold of blanket, is to be placed, and lastly, a spider of hoops, or any thing of a similar nature, that will support the bedclothes, is to be procured, as pressure seems rather to aggravate the disease. A gentle steam arises

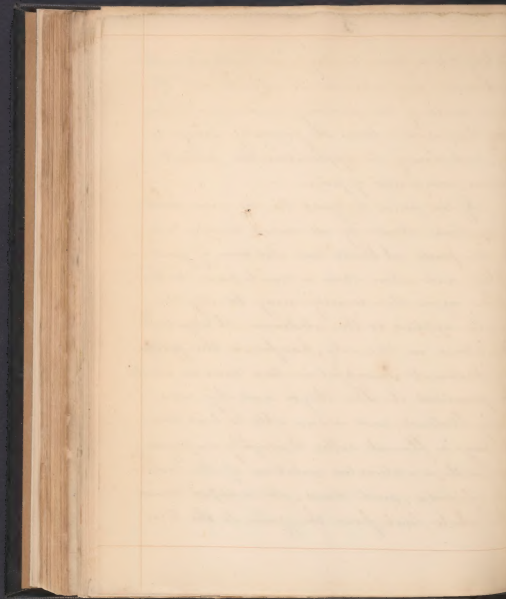


from the bricks, which causes a universal perspiration over the leg, and seldom fails, to bring relief. This application should be continued for half an hour, at least, and repeated, ~~every~~ two or three hours. After its operation, the limb should be wrapped in flannel. If the application be made whilst there is much fever, and no perspiration ensues, a small quantity of blood should be drawn then, the bath will have its desired effect. Generally, a few applications will relieve the tumefaction and pain, but when the practice is not immediately successful, it is to be continued, for a considerable length of time. On account of the relief obtained, during its operation, the patient will often beg for a speedy repetition, in which, she may generally be indulged. An embrocation, composed of a quart of brandy, and a tolerable large ox-gall, is found to be of very great



utility. This forms a very neat and pleasant liniment, and should be rubbed over the whole course of the swelling, and repeated, once every three or four hours. It frequently brings relief, and during its application, the patient seldom complains of pain.

If the pains be great in the groin and pelvis, Leeches should by all means be applied, to the parts. A blister has also been of great utility, and when there is much pain in the uterine region, this remedy may be very beneficially applied, to the abdomen. A respectable Practitioner in this city, has found the following treatment successful in two cases in which he prescribed it. The thigh and leg were freely blistered, and when able to bear bandaging, a flannel roller thoroughly impregnated, with a saturated solution of the muriate of soda, and dried, was wrapped round the whole limb, from the groin to the toes.



as tight, as could be borne, and continually tightened, as the swelling subsided. He gave nitrous powders freely during the time.

When the force of the disease has abated, and the swelling been reduced, the patient's strength should be supported, by gentle stimulants. Wine and Bark in moderate quantities, should be given, and a nourishing diet admitted. The patient should be kept, perfectly free, from all exposure to cold, and if the limb remains weak, the cold bath, is necessary, to restore the vigour of the parts, and considerable care should be taken, to avoid a relapse.—

